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NOTES FROM THE MEDICAL PRESS

IN CHARGE OF

ELISABETH ROBINSON SCOVIL

CONVENIENT APPLICATION OF MERCURY.—A writer in the *Paris Médical* suggests the administration of mercury by the application of a ball of mercurial ointment to the sole of the foot before drawing on the stocking. Constant pressure from stepping on it forces the drug into the tissues and absorption is complete. It can also be given in a cocoa butter suppository. A transient diarrhoea may follow, but it is negligible.

SPINAL ANESTHESIA.—The *Lancet* while advocating the use of novocain in spinal anesthesia declares that the operation is a method which should be used with scrupulous care and attention to detail. It is considered most suitable for use in hospitals, where the nursing staff is familiar with the technic and after treatment.

CASSION DISEASE.—The *Cleveland Medical Journal* observes that in disease due to compressed air the relief of urinary retention is of special importance, because cystitis is a most serious complication. This is best accomplished by the use of pituitary extract.

DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING IN CHILDREN.—The *Journal of the American Medical Association* in a synopsis of an article, says that a child suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting owing to a loss of fluid, loss of bile salts, with an empty intestine and in a starving condition, is easily poisoned by the toxic substances normally present in the intestine and which are then more readily absorbed. The hot weather form of this disease may be explained by the additional loss of fluid from the body, due to evaporation, the water being necessary to keep down the body temperature. The one thing essential in treatment is to get the volume of body fluids back to normal, or above normal, by the intravenous or subcutaneous injection of saline solution.

TORPID WOUNDS.—A paper in *Paris Médical* states that when certain wounds refuse to heal no drugs are needed but measures to promote circulation. Walking with a wounded leg may aggravate the gravity disturbance. The leg should be kept raised enough to counteract gravitation of the blood and the muscles vigorously contracted for five minutes every hour, with daily massage and hot air douches.

CONGENITAL FLAT FOOT.—A surgeon, writing in a Danish medical journal, says that talipes valgus should be corrected before the child

begins to walk. Treatment should be begun at about eight or nine months of age. Operative means are unnecessary when the overstretched muscle is to be shortened. Patient and cautious stretching of the muscles under general anesthesia is advised. During the preceding months daily manipulations of the foot along the lines of correction may be sufficient. If not, after the stretching under anesthesia, the foot and leg are enclosed in a plaster cast for some weeks and then a small, leather correcting appliance is worn, massage of the plantar muscles and bathing being employed.

PREOPERATIVE TREATMENT FOR STERILIZATION.—The *Annals of Surgery* recommends a solution consisting of acetone, alcohol and one of the coal tar disinfectants of a high phenol coefficient as more efficient than any other agent used for skin sterilization. The acetone acts as a solvent of the oily substance of the skin and thus helps to expose the bacteria to the germicide. The alcohol has the power to penetrate into the crevices of the skin, through its disability to decompose and remove any small particles of air. It is germicidal in solutions as weak as 30 per cent. The coal tar disinfectant acts as a powerful germicide. There is no irritation, except a burning sensation if it is used on the scrotum. It does not stain the skin. Its application is simple and it reduces to a minimum the time needed to prepare for an operation, so is most useful in emergencies. The skin does not blister, nor exfoliate.

REINFECTION IN SYPHILIS.—The *Journal of the American Medical Association* says that recently reports have appeared of apparently well authenticated cases of a second and a few of a third, or even a fourth, infection. Modern methods by rendering a cure effectual have also opened up the possibility of reinfection.

PELLAGRA.—A French surgeon, practising in Egypt, is convinced that pellagra is the result of defective functioning of the endocrine glands, especially the suprarenals. In a patient who had died from the disease the suprarenals were found double the normal size, hard and purple.

CLEANLINESS AS A PRESERVATIVE.—It is stated that cleanliness and cold were the only preservatives needed to accomplish the keeping of raw milk fresh and sweet for two to four weeks in midsummer. In conjunction with cold, cleanliness inhibits the growth of micro-organisms detrimental to foods.

GASOLINE FIRES.—The *Lancet* says that as a result of a series of tests it has been found that a mixture of sawdust and bicarbonate of soda, twelve parts sawdust to ten of soda, is most efficacious in extinguishing small gasoline fires. The mixture may be kept in bins holding eight bushels. It must be applied rapidly and in large quantities.

MUSCULAR RHEUMATISM.—A paper in the *New York Medical Journal* says that the remedies of most avail are rest, heat, purgation, salicylates. Cold increases the pain; the value of certain antiphlogistic pastes is probably due to their retention of heat. Colocynth is recommended as a purgative. Aspirin is the popular salicylate. Opiates are out of place because they check elimination from skin and bowels.

WOUND DRESSINGS.—A writer in the *British Medical Journal* expresses the opinion, after ten months' experience in a casualty clearing-station, that it is not so much the antiseptic dressing used as its intelligent application that matters. Any of the applications used gave good average results; there were cases in which some particular application was more suitable, or more easily applied than any other.

THE VERONAL HABIT.—*American Medicine* asserts that the continued use of veronal, even in small doses, may lead to an intoxication of the cerebellum and the vestibular apparatus. It causes a condition of euphoria, or well-being, which conduces to its becoming a habit. It inhibits the functions of the intestinal tract and the kidneys.

DRESSING AFTER CATARACT OPERATION.—*The Indian Medical Gazette* says that after a cataract extraction in order to produce an even pressure over the front of the eyeball swabs of wet, sterilized wool are used. The wool is pulled, not cut, into pads about an inch thick and three inches in diameter. These are sterilized by boiling in 1 in 5000 biniodid solution. Two of these, sopping wet, are laid on the eyes; with the straightened fingers they are gently pressed down over the eyes, so that the swab becomes molded to the eye and fills in the hollows around it. Over this is placed a wet pad of lint, or six layers of gauze, then a figure of eight bandage is applied fairly firmly. Next day the wool and gauze will be found to form a complete mould of the eyeball and orbital opening. It is very comfortable, produces no feeling of uneven pressure, while it allows the eye to move easily and renders it almost impossible to open the eyes.

REST OF LUNG BY POSTURE.—In *Colorado Medicine* it is suggested that tuberculous patients may be trained to rest at night and during the day on the more afflicted side, and in addition to place a small firm pillow under this side to restrain to a greater degree its motion. It has been found efficacious in reducing the amount of sputum, promoting healing, hindering relapses and diminishing fever.

THUMB SUCKING.—Dr. L. Duncan Bulkley of New York suggests that a cardboard cuff around the upper arm would prevent a child from sucking the thumb. This habit is a cause of deformity, bringing about mal-occlusion of the teeth, a narrowing of the palatal arch and nasal obstruction.